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ABSTRACT

This guide is intended to guide local discussion and assist public school staff in implementing standards, assessment, and reporting procedures under the policies of the Nebraska State Board of Education. In 1998, the State Board of Education adopted the Nebraska Learning Educational Achievement through Rigorous Nebraska Standards (Nebraska L.E.A.R.N.S.), and in 1999, implementation policies to support phased-in assessment and reporting were adopted. The Nebraska L.E.A.R.N.S. standards are voluntary guidelines for local districts to use as they design curriculum, plan instruction, and measure how well students are learning. The guide contains these sections: (1) "School Improvement in Nebraska: A Focus on Standards, Assessment, and Accountability"; (2) "Implementing Standards in Nebraska Schools"; (3) "Conducting Assessment"; (4) "Developing a Local Assessment Plan"; (5) "Accountability Review and Reporting"; (6) "Common Questions and Answers"; and (7) "Appendices." The five appendixes contain a list of definitions, a description of assessment policy, tables of coverage of selected tests, proposed plans for updating standards, and a sample chart for reporting. (SLD)

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School-based Teacher-led Assessment and Reporting System

A Planning Guide for Nebraska Schools

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Nebraska Department of Education

NEBRASKA L.E.A.R.N.S.

Leading Educational Achievement through Rigorous Nebraska Standards

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This document was developed by the Nebraska Department of Education with input and assistance from Dr. Barbara Plake and Dr. Jim Impara of the Buros Center for Testing, University of Nebraska-Lincoln; and from committees representing local educators, educational service unit staff, higher education, professional organizations, and other interested persons.

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October 1999

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PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

Background Information: Law and Policy

The Nebraska State Board of Education and the Nebraska Legislature have mandated assessment and accountability of Nebraska schools, based on academic content standards for students. Legislation passed in 1998 and 1999 requires assessment of student performance and reporting to NDE.

In early 1998, the Nebraska State Board of Education adopted standards for reading/writing, math, science, and social studies/history, known as Nebraska L.E.A.R.N.S. (Leading Educational Achievement through Rigorous Nebraska Standards). In October 1998, the Board adopted policies to guide the assessment and reporting of students' progress in achieving state standards. At its March 1999 meeting, the Board adopted implementation policies to support phased-in assessment and reporting. Planning for implementation of standards, assessment, and accountability reporting is continuing at both the local and state levels.

Purpose of this Guide

The Nebraska Department of Education is charged with statewide implementation of these laws and policies. Therefore, this guide is intended to:

- **Guide local discussion** in implementing standards, assessment, and reporting procedures. Questions regarding implementation procedures are welcome at any time. They may be submitted to the State Department of Education via letter, telephone, or email.

- **Assist Nebraska public school staff** as they plan new procedures for assessment of students and reporting of performance to local patrons and to the Nebraska Department of Education.

Information regarding standards, assessment, and accountability is also included in other Nebraska Department of Education publications. As needed, requirements to support implementation of State Board polices and state statutes will also be included in appropriate Department of Education rules and regulations.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT IN NEBRASKA: A Focus On Standards, Assessment, And Accountability Reporting

A PLANNING TIME LINE

1997–98

State Board of Education adopts standards for reading/writing, mathematics, science, and social studies/history, known as Nebraska L.E.A.R.N.S. (Leading Educational Achievement through Rigorous Nebraska Standards)

Legislature amends 79-760 to require statewide assessment and reporting

1998–99

State Board of Education adopts assessment and accountability reporting policies

Local schools, ESUs, NDE, and others review curriculum based on L.E.A.R.N.S., consider implications for school improvement, conduct/participate in staff development

Special programs develop materials, supply resources to provide support and assistance (Goals 2000, Special Populations, Title I, and so forth)

Legislature considers LB 812 (requiring assessment and reporting of student progress in spring 2001), holds bill for 2000 session, schedules Interim Study

Legislature passes LB 144 requiring a statewide **Report Card** including composite of student performance (to be published in fall 2000)

1999–2000

Continued state and local planning and staff development for assessment and reporting

NDE distributes Tool Kit for local assessment to Nebraska school districts (November 1999)

Schools develop local assessment plans

NAEP assessment conducted in randomly selected schools (grades 4 and 8 in science and math) (January and February 2000)

NDE gathers information for LB 144 statewide **Report Card** (to be published/distributed in fall 2000)

8 *Continued*

2000-2001

LB 144 statewide **Report Card** to be published (including aggregated student performance) (fall 2000)

Schools submit local assessment plans to NDE for approval (September 2000)

Schools assess student progress toward reading/writing/speaking/listening standards in grades 4, 8, and 11

NDE gathers information for **State of Schools** report (to be published fall 2001)

2001-2002

State of Schools report to include aggregated statewide **Report Card** information plus school profiles, student progress in achieving reading/writing/speaking/listening standards, and other school information (published/distributed fall 2001)

Schools assess student progress toward mathematics standards in grades 4, 8, and 11

NAEP assessment conducted in randomly selected schools

NDE gathers information for fall **State of Schools** report (to be published fall 2002)

2002-2003

State of Schools report including school profiles, student progress in achieving mathematics standards, and aggregated statewide **Report Card** information (published/distributed fall 2002)

Local assessment and reporting continue

10-8-99

STARS

School-based Teacher-led Assessment and Reporting System

Nebraska Planning Guide

Section I

School Improvement in Nebraska:

A Focus on Standards, Assessment, and Accountability

I. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT IN NEBRASKA: A FOCUS ON STANDARDS, ASSESSMENT, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The Nebraska Scene: A Commitment To Improvement

Nebraskans realize that improving upon the quality of life in our communities includes making a commitment to the youngest of Nebraskans, our children. When they leave our schools, it is important that future citizens be prepared to succeed so that they can continue to learn throughout their lives, enter the workforce in jobs that will provide satisfying careers, and participate in a democratic way of life that values the individual roles and responsibilities of our families, communities, and society.

The State Board of Education has made a commitment that Nebraska schools must be "the best in the nation." The two key priorities are to "improve educational opportunities" and "improve learning" from pre-school education through the programs of community colleges, four-year colleges and universities, and beyond. It is essential that we provide quality educational programs, along with equal opportunity for all individuals to participate in those programs, if we are to be "the best in the nation."

Raising The Bar: Increasing Expectations

Nebraska schools have always been among the educational leaders in our nation. How can we step ahead and become the best in the country? By building on our strengths. Quality teachers, administrators, and boards of education continually work hard to make things better for students, families, and communities. To maintain and improve our high level of education, we must continue to work together to achieve common goals.

The first thing we must do is raise the bar for educators, communities, and students. This means higher levels of effort and achievement must be expected. We must make a commitment to a set of goals that represent high expectations for all. To be prepared to succeed when they leave our schools, our students must have the knowledge and skills to:

- Listen, speak, read, and write effectively.
- Learn and apply mathematical, scientific, and technological principles.
- Learn and apply knowledge of the past in order to understand the present and plan for the future.
- Think and express creatively and react to the creative work of others.

The second thing we must do is set higher standards. The Nebraska standards for reading/writing, mathematics, science, and social studies/history have significantly increased our expectations of what schools are to teach and students are to know. We should expect more in the breadth of subject matter and depth of knowledge.

Nebraska L.E.A.R.N.S. standards do not represent all aspects of teaching and learning. In addition, students need a broad background in the visual and performing arts, health and wellness, vocational education, technology, and foreign language, and schools must be the primary places where this additional academic learning happens. Nebraska L.E.A.R.N.S. represents the foundation for success both in and out of school. These standards, incorporated with other disciplines, form the foundation for success that must be part of a quality education for all children.

A Local System of Statewide Standards

The Nebraska L.E.A.R.N.S. standards are voluntary. They serve as guidelines or benchmarks for local districts to use as they design curriculum, plan instruction, and measure how well students are learning. The standards provide a foundation for local decision-making, and, therefore, honor the great strength we have in local leadership.

As the local policy-making body, the district's board of education fulfills a critical role in the drive to improve student performance through the system of standards, assessment, and accountability reporting. This role may be characterized by three initiatives of the local board: (1) leading in the conversation to develop local standards or to align local expectations with state standards; (2) supporting the process by requesting regular reports to the board, fostering support for the process within the community, and holding administrators and teachers accountable for improvements in student learning; (3) demonstrating a commitment to provide the necessary local district resources to assure the long-term success of the process. This includes providing time for necessary staff development, funds for the support of the assessment process, and curricular improvement, and a system of technology that supports the gathering and analysis o Xevidence to make data-driven decisions.

School personnel should discuss the content standards and translate them into local expectations for students and teachers. Local districts will then determine what evidence will be necessary to show that students have learned what is expected. The process of discussing the state standards at the local level is the first step toward making the standards meaningful in the community and school.

A partnership of state level guidance and local level decision-making is crucial to making changes in schools that will result in improved learning for all students.

USING STANDARDS, ASSESSMENT, AND REPORTING FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Requirements and Guidelines

All public school districts in Nebraska participate in systematic school improvement, as established in accreditation requirements (Rule 10). Schools accredited by the North Central Association, a regional accrediting agency, also must fulfill a requirement for school improvement. These procedures are intended to improve student learning. The Nebraska standards for reading/writing, mathematics, science, and social studies should be used in the school improvement process to guide schools in establishing goals, assessing progress, and implementing local improvement strategies.

Nebraska schools conduct systematic school improvement by using a continuous process based upon the "Nebraska Framework for School Improvement," North Central Association School Improvement guides, or other guides. A school improvement plan typically encompasses a period of five years and includes periodic visits by external teams who review and recommend continued achievement of local goals.

Incorporating Standards and Assessment

Most Nebraska school districts have a school improvement action plan that includes local goals for increasing learning opportunities and/or increasing student achievement. The review and implementation of local standards for learning, the gathering of information about student performance, and the reporting of progress (standards, assessment, and accountability activities) should become part of the school improvement process in order to set goals, assess progress and report results. Specific guidance is provided in NDE School Improvement materials and workshops.

The school profile, containing an analysis and summary of assessment data, and the action plan, containing improvement goals and strategies, will guide the external team. Selected members of the team specifically trained in assessment review may also critique the local assessment plan. The visiting team serves in a consultive role to review progress and advise regarding future directions. Persons who serve on the teams are expected to provide knowledge and insights that will strengthen the local process. Team members come from varied backgrounds and may include both educators and other persons.

The chart on the following page illustrates the relationship between "school improvement" and "standards, assessment, and accountability."

The School Improvement Process	How to Incorporate Standards, Assessment, Accountability Reporting
The Foundation for the Action Plan	
Phase I: Preplan *What do we want to do?*	Review state and local standards and the implementation process
Phase II: Develop/Update a Mission *What is our mission?*	Review Mission Statement and check for focus on student learning
Phase III: Gather and Analyze Information *Where are we now?*	Review, analyze: • Student performance data • Other data • 4 A's of a self-assessment (p. 23) • Practices in place in curriculum, instruction, assessment, and supervision
Phase IV: Select Improvement Goals *What do we want to accomplish?*	Establish goals for improving student achievement (based on analysis of local data)
The Plan	
Phase V: Prepare an Action Plan *How do we get there?*	Include strategies, activities drawn from 4 A's review, other research, staff development, and so forth
The Action	
Phase VI: Implement the Plan *Working toward the goals.*	Conduct staff development Carry out strategies in the classroom
Phase VII: Review and Update *How did we do?*	Compare with data gathered in Phase III

Supporting Student Achievement Through Professional Development

Local staff development is an integral component of school improvement. Staff development focused on standards-based instruction and assessment will help accomplish improved learning. The Nebraska Quality Indicators for Effective Staff Development (developed in 1997-98 by a team of Nebraska educators representing Educational Service Units, higher education, local educational agencies, professional organizations, and the Nebraska Department of Education) includes the following list of **Indicators of Effective Staff Development**:

- Provides a balance between individual and organizational development.
- Promotes continuous inquiry and improvement, **driven by a coherent long-term plan which includes a clear set of classroom, school, and district goals**.
- **Is based upon student learning goals driven by data from multiple assessments and evaluation strategies**.
- Reflects best available research and practice in teaching, learning, leadership, and professional development.
- Commits substantial time, money, and other resources toward the identified goals.
- Utilizes collaboration and partnerships to expand education and community networks.
- Incorporates a process of individual and organizational growth that includes readiness, problem-solving, planning, implementation, follow-up, and reflection.
- Enables teachers to develop further expertise in subject content, teaching strategies, use of technologies, and other essential elements in **teaching to high standards**.
- Respects and nurtures the intellectual and leadership capacities of teachers, administrators, and others in the community of learners.
- Provides structures which support the implementation of professional development at individual, collegial, and organizational levels.
- Evaluates the linkage between teacher effectiveness and student learning and **this assessment guides subsequent professional development.**

Leadership for Student Achievement: A Local Board of Education Framework

The following item has been provided by the Nebraska Association of School Boards (NASB) as a framework to guide local boards of education.

The National School Board Association's *Key Work of School Boards* highlights the need for boards to work collaboratively with staff and the entire community to put student achievement at the center of what they do. This redefinition of the local board's role is consistent with Nebraska's school improvement process and reinforces the state's tenet that informed and committed leadership is essential to the improvement of student learning.

The Nebraska Association of School Boards has adapted pertinent elements of the National School Board Association's philosophy to clarify the responsibility of the local board of education in the development and adoption of the district's school improvement plan, standards for student performance, and local assessment plan.

Key Actions of Boards (From The Nebraska Association of School Boards)

- Participate with staff, students, and the community in the initial development and the periodic review of the district's vision of student achievement.

- Adopt:
  (1) clear standards for student performance which deal with what students should know and be able to do at key points in their school career;

  (2) an assessment process which is explicitly tied to the standards and uses multiple, ongoing strategies to measure student success at regular intervals;

  (3) the goals developed by staff and community to improve student learning.

- Ensure that the adopted standards, assessments, and goals for student performance are widely and thoroughly explained to the community.

- Ensure that the board's policies and the district's budget promote and support the standards, assessments, and goals.

- Require frequent reports on the progress of the goals.

- Review on a regular basis both summary and disaggregated data on student achievement.

- Ensure that the school improvement plan is periodically adjusted based on the assessment data and community input.

- Use the plan as the foundation for the board's short- and long-range decision-making.

School-based Teacher-led Assessment and Reporting System

Nebraska Planning Guide

Section II

Implementing Standards in Nebraska Schools

II. IMPLEMENTING STANDARDS IN NEBRASKA SCHOOLS

The Development and Use of The Nebraska L.E.A.R.N.S.

Between January and June 1998, the Nebraska Board of Education adopted academic content standards for the areas of reading/writing, mathematics, science, and social studies for grade ranges of K-1, 2-4, 5-8, and 9-12.

The standards, known as *Nebraska Leading Educational Achievement through Rigorous Nebraska Standards*, or Nebraska L.E.A.R.N.S., indicate what Nebraska students should know and be able to do in each of four curricular areas. Students may learn the content at any time during their school experience, but the benchmarking at grades K-1, 4, 8, and 12 establishes a point at which students should achieve the standards.

The standards are voluntary. They are intended to guide educators in providing instruction, help students and parents better understand learning goals, and assist policy leaders in establishing a reporting system for public schools.

The Nebraska standards were developed through the combined efforts of educators and patrons throughout the State of Nebraska. Each set of standards was also reviewed by a panel of external consultants and further considered and revised by the State Board of Education. In August 1998, copies of the standards were published by the *Omaha World Herald* and distributed in local newspapers throughout Nebraska. Copies are currently available on the Nebraska Department of Education Web site www.edneb.org to any interested persons.

In the fall of 1998, many Nebraska educators, in cooperation with Educational Service Unit (ESU) staff, began reviewing the standards in order to compare them with local curricula. Also in the fall of 1998, a statewide task force began work on correlating curriculum and assessment of students with severe disabilities to the Nebraska state standards. The work of this task force will result in a model from which local districts can develop "expanded standards" and alternate assessment models to appropriately reflect the functional nature of the skills needed by students with severe disabilities.

Staff development activities provided through state, ESU, and local resources are assisting local educators in implementing standards and developing assessment processes.

Adopting Local Standards

The implementation of local assessment procedures should begin with the adoption of standards. Districts may choose to adopt Nebraska L.E.A.R.N.S. or a set of locally developed standards. While a local board may vote to adopt state or local standards at a single meeting, the real adoption occurs in the classrooms and faculty meetings where instructional and assessment strategies are designed, used, and modified. Districts are advised to establish a schedule for standards' adoption that allows teachers and administrators to concentrate on one or two subject areas for a specified time (probably at least one year). Adopting a set of standards is, then, not so much an event as it is the beginning of a cycle, and a way for all staff, through staff development activities incorporating discussion and sharing of instructional content and methods, to strengthen teaching and learning in every school in Nebraska.

THE FOUR A's
AWARENESS, ALIGNMENT, ASSESSMENT, ACCOUNTABILITY

An Implementation Rubric

The four charts on the following pages were developed by committees of Nebraska educators from schools, Educational Service Units, NDE, and other agencies. They are a guide to assist educators in the implementation of standards and assessment. The rubric should help local schools base classroom instruction on accepted and appropriate academic standards, carry out standards-based assessment, and use the information for school improvement.

AWARENESS

Awareness	Stage One	Stage Two	Stage Three
Knowledge	Local board and staff gain knowledge of standards-based education (e.g., inservice, reading conferences, etc.).	Parents and community gain knowledge of standards-based education (e.g., newsletter, meetings, reports, etc.).	All stakeholders use a common language regarding standards-based education.
Commitment	Local board and staff develop/acknowledge a rationale for standards-based education.	Local board and staff make a commitment to standards-based education (e.g., policy, resolution, adoption, etc.).	Local board allocates resources for standards-based education (e.g., time, money, staff development, etc.).
Connections	Local board and staff examine the connection of standards to mission, belief statements, and school improvement process.	District steering committee designs a plan and time line for integration of standards-based education into an on-going school improvement process.	Local school improvement plans incorporate standards-based education into target area goals and strategies.

ALIGNMENT TO STANDARDS

Alignment	Stage One	Stage Two	Stage Three
Curriculum	District has a K-12 curriculum development process.	Curriculum review and update takes place on a regular cycle.	Curriculum development process includes an annual review of all content areas.
	Staff reviews alignment of current curriculum practices to district curriculum documents.	Staff identifies the relationship of district curriculum to Nebraska/ locally adopted standards.	Nebraska/locally adopted standards are imbedded into district curriculum practices and documents.
	Staff reviews promising practices in content areas (research, national and Nebraska standards, frameworks).	Staff compares current district practices with promising practices.	Staff incorporates selected promising practices into district curriculum.
Instruction	Teachers can articulate learner outcomes.	Teachers can explain the relationship between outcomes and instruction.	Instruction matches the curricular outcomes.
	Teachers are aware of best instructional practices.	Teachers use a variety of instructional strategies to help students to meet standards.	Teachers select the strategies, including technology, most appropriate for the intended outcome.
	Teachers base instructional decisions on inferred needs and interests of the class.	Teachers base instructional decisions on needs of large groups within the class.	Teachers differentiate instructional strategies to meet individual student needs and students receive specific feedback on their progress.
	Teachers make content decisions based primarily on textbook.	Teachers make content decisions using local curriculum outcomes/ standards.	Teachers make content decisions using local curriculum outcomes/ standards and the needs of the students.
	Students and teachers use technology for curriculum and instruction on a limited basis.	Teachers align technology to curriculum and instruction.	Teachers fully integrate aligned technology into curriculum and instruction.

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ALIGNMENT TO STANDARDS

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Alignment	Stage One	Stage Two	Stage Three
Resources	District resources are identified and acquired based on perceived needs and available dollars.	District establishes a process for resource identification and acquisition based on general needs' assessment.	District implements a continuous process to upgrade resources and technologies based on specific learning needs.
	Students and teachers have access to technology.	Technology is available but not fully utilized.	Adequate and appropriate technology is available and effectively utilized by all/nearly all.
	District makes limited adjustment of instructional time beyond traditional day and calendar (extended day, Sat./summer classes, etc.).	District allocates instructional time based on group needs.	District allocates instructional time based on specific learning needs.
Communication and Support	Staff development has limited tie to school improvement process or is not driven by identified needs.	Staff development has ties to school improvement process but is driven by the perceived need.	Staff development is driven by district school improvement process to include integration of standards.
	Staff development is an event (awareness only).	Staff development includes awareness and skill-building activities.	Staff development is a process which includes resources for implementation, support, and follow-up (e.g., coaching/mentoring, study groups, action research).
	Supervision of teacher is based on evidence of instructional practices.	Supervision of teacher is based on implementation of promising practices and staff development initiatives.	Supervision of teacher is aligned to school improvement process, instructional practices, implementation of standards, and student achievement.
	Student communication focuses on the requirements of the class and the grade received.	Students correlate class requirements to specific learner outcomes.	Students understand and can communicate what they are expected to know and be able to do.
	Educators talk to each other about student learning in relationship to the standards.	Educators talk to students about expected student learning in relationship to the standards.	Students, teachers, administrators, parents, and community members engage in on-going dialogue about student learning.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment	Stage One	Stage Two	Stage Three
Literacy	District has a glossary of assessment/ evaluation terms.	Staff uses assessment/ evaluation terminology in informal conversation (e.g., teacher work-rooms, committee work, etc.).	Staff consistently and correctly uses assess-ment/evaluation termi-nology.
	Teachers/administrators can define assessment and evaluation.	Teachers/administrators can explain purpose and use of assessment and evaluation.	Board and parents can explain purpose and use of assessment and evaluation.
	Staff is familiar with terms but is unable to articulate the use and purposes of norm-referenced tests (NRTs) and criterion-referenced assessments (CRAs).	Teachers/administrators can explain use and purposes of NRTs and CRAs.	Board and parents can explain the use and purposes of NRTs and CRAs.
	Teachers/administrators can list a variety of assessment tools.	Teachers/administrators can describe the uses of a variety of assessment tools.	Teachers/administrators can identify the strengths and limitations of specific assessment tools (e.g., paper and pencil, performance, portfolio assessment).
	Small random groups of teachers have participated in profes-sional development in assessment.	Professional develop-ment in assessment is tied to specific projects (e.g., curriculum cycle, grant activity).	District has a compre-hensive (on-going) professional develop-ment program in assessment including new staff orientation.

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ASSESSMENT

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Assessment	Stage One	Stage Two	Stage Three
District Assessment Plan (or Developing Assessment Systems)	District plan identifies which Nebraska/local standards will be assessed/evaluated.	District plan designates/ identifies specific assessment/evaluation strategies for each standard to be assessed.	District plan identifies on-going procedures and processes for evaluating assessment results.
	District identifies the "what and when" of assessment and evaluation.	District identifies the "what, when, how, and why" of assessment and evaluation.	District implements the "what, when, how, and why" of assessment and evaluation.
	District plan identifies assessment and evaluation strategies that consist primarily of NRTs and limited CRAs.	District plan identifies assessment and evaluation strategies that consist of NRTs, several CRAs, and/or classroom-based assessments.	District plan identifies multiple assessment and evaluation strategies, incorporating all content areas.
	District plan references state and federal guidelines for inclusion of special needs students.	District plan articulates policies and guidelines for assessment/ evaluation of students, with special needs.	District plan clearly articulates accommodation/modification criteria for students, with special needs.
	District plan references the need for reliable and valid assessments.	District plan includes policies and guidelines for valid and reliable assessments.	District plan articulates specific criteria/processes for establishing and measuring validity and reliability.
	District plan includes policies and guidelines for efficient scoring.	District plan includes policies and guidelines for efficient scoring and documentation.	District plan includes specific processes and procedures for scoring and documentation of assessment results.
	District reports assessment and evaluation data as required.	District reports assessment and evaluation information as required, and on specific innovations.	District has an on-going process to inform the board and community about assessment and evaluation results.

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ASSESSMENT

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Assessment	Stage One	Stage Two	Stage Three
Using Assessments	Teachers/administrators articulate district assessment and evaluation practices.	Teachers use district assessment and evaluation practices in classroom.	All teachers consistently use district assessment and evaluation practices.
	Teachers use limited assessment strategies.	Teachers use multiple assessment measures.	Teachers use multiple assessment strategies as part of the instructional process.
	Teachers use assessment information to make instructional decisions about the class as a whole.	Teachers use assessment information to make instructional decisions about small groups within the class. Membership in the groups is determined by assessment information.	Teachers systematically use assessment information to make instructional decisions for individual students as well as groups.
	Staff analyzes assessment data for required reporting purposes only.	Staff analyzes assessment information to describe who has learned, who has not learned, and what teaching strategies have been effective (diagnostic information).	Staff supplements the analysis of assessment data with additional information to provide a broader perspective of cause and effect and to guide planned change (e.g., teacher perceptions, parent surveys, etc.).
	Staff uses assessment information to report student data related to specific purposes (e.g., report cards, grants, projects).	Staff uses assessment information to evaluate programs and report progress.	Staff uses assessment information to make program decisions (e.g., curriculum emphasis, sequence, and design; innovations/strategies; resource allocations).
	School provides students and parents with individual assessment information based on achievement of standards.	School involves students and parents in the interpretation, analysis, and application of assessment information.	Students and parents use assessment information from a variety of sources, including self-assessment, to make life choices.

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ASSESSMENT

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Assessment	Stage One	Stage Two	Stage Three
Reporting/ Managing Assessment Information	Traditional report cards are supplemented with limited information related to student learning (e.g., skills checklist).	Reports to parents and students primarily focus on student performances and demonstrations of knowledge.	Reports to parents and students reflect specific individual progress toward meeting district and state standards.
	Student's cumulative record is a compilation of grades, courses, attendance, etc., and provides limited evidence of student performance.	Student's cumulative record, in addition to traditional information, primarily focuses on student performance and demonstration of knowledge.	Student's cumulative record includes data indicating student's strengths and progress toward meeting district/ state standards.
	Data is primarily available at the district level and is organized around district curriculum.	Data is organized around district and state standards—accessible primarily at the building level.	Data is accessible on a daily basis to professional staff involved with the day-to-day education of the student (e.g., technology-based district information management system).
	Assessment information is analyzed, interpreted, and reported in limited classrooms/content areas.	Assessment information is analyzed, interpreted, reported, and used within grade levels but not across grade levels.	Assessment information is analyzed, interpreted, reported, and communicated across all grade levels.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability	Stage One	Stage Two	Stage Three
Content	District reports information that meets state requirements.	District reports information related to local innovations and federal projects in addition to state requirements.	District reports unique information and insights which correlate to local school improvement plan.
Format	District report consists primarily of tables with no descriptive analysis.	District report consists of tables, some charts/ graphs, with limited descriptive analysis.	District report represents data with clear charts and graphs with accompanying narrative and descriptive analysis.
Analysis	District disaggregates information as required.	District disaggregates information as required, plus that of additional subpopulations.	District purposefully disaggregates information relevant to the unique subpopulations and local school improvement plan (e.g., new students, those with limited English proficiency, students with disabilities, etc.).
	Analysis is a brief narrative statement which paraphrases the information displayed in tables.	Analysis is a narrative which explains the significance of the data.	Narrative analysis includes explanations of significance, evaluative statements, and implications for future consideration.
Distribution	District distributes reports as required.	District distributes reports primarily through education-related situations (e.g., annual reports, parent/ teacher conferences, newsletters to parents).	District distributes reports to a wide range of stakeholders in a variety of formats and settings in the community (e.g., meetings, conferences, press releases, etc.).
Use of Report	District compiles and distributes report to meet state requirements.	District uses report/data to support decisions.	District uses report/data to plan and/or make policy decisions and modifications, allocate resources, and coordinate state/local efforts.

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Section III

Conducting Assessment

III. CONDUCTING ASSESSMENT

State Board of Education Policies on Assessment and Accountability Reporting

In October 1998, after several months of discussion and input, the Nebraska Board of Education adopted policies for student assessment and for accountability reporting. The **assessment policy** emphasizes that **assessment of student academic performance is a local responsibility that should primarily serve to improve instruction and increase learning in the classroom**. It further states:

- Since each assessment process or instrument has different strengths, no single one can adequately achieve all purposes.
- Multiple assessment measures are needed to provide complete information for teachers, parents, and policy makers.

The Board expects all public school districts in Nebraska to participate in an assessment process implemented through the use of multiple validated measures already in use in Nebraska schools. The process should provide information to monitor the progress of public school districts and to assist in making informed decisions.

The State Board's **accountability policy** states that:

- Reporting public school performance to the local and statewide community is critical to improving the quality of education in Nebraska.
- Local and state reports should include information to provide accountability to the public, assist local school district policy makers in focusing programs and resources, and support local school improvement procedures.
- Consistency in data gathered and uniformity in reporting by all districts will best inform Nebraskans about the educational performance of school districts and will support local and state level decision-making for continued improvement of student learning.

Planning for Assessment in Nebraska Schools

Beginning in the 2000-2001 school year, all public school districts will implement the assessment procedures shown on the following schedule. The report to NDE will be based upon state standards (or upon local standards approved by the State Board of Education.) Schools using State Board approved local standards as the basis for assessment and reporting may participate as a pilot group to refine guidelines or procedures for the unique local assessment and reporting process.

This assessment will help ascertain student progress in achieving state standards (or approved local standards) beginning with reading/writing. Assessment of mathematics, science, and social studies will be phased-in during succeeding years. Support and assistance for effective assessment, already in progress, will continue. Additional support will continue through local, ESU, and statewide workshops and seminars, sharing of material and resources, and so forth. Technical support documents will also be provided for Nebraska schools.

ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING SCHEDULE

Beginning in 1999-2000: For Statewide "Report Card"

Beginning in 2000-01: For "State of Schools" Report, Including Statewide "Report Card"

What	Who	Submit To	Due Date
Selected demographic information for statewide "Report Card"	Local district	NDE	During 1999-00 school year as requested on NDE forms
Development of a local assessment plan	Local district	NDE	September 2000
Norm-referenced test in reading/writing	Local district to all students in grades 4, 8, and high school	Local Board and community (to NDE as needed to show percent of students achieving standards)	Local assessment during 2000-01
Criterion-referenced assessment in reading/writing/speaking/listening	Local district to all students in grades 4, 8, and high school	Local Board and community (to NDE as needed to show percent of students achieving standards)	Local assessment during 2000-01
State writing assessment (using state selected writing process)	Local district to all students in grades 4, 8, and high school	NDE	Spring 2001
Primary grade progress	Primary grade staff (teacher observation and other assessments, not to include NRT below grade 2)	Parents or guardians (general summaries in local reports)	Locally determined
NAEP assessment	Randomly selected local districts	U.S. Dept. of Education	January–February 2000

Additional details may be contingent upon pilot project results, further input from educators and patrons, and State Board and/or legislative action.

SCHEDULE FOR ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING OF STUDENT PROGRESS

It is anticipated that assessment and reporting of student progress toward state standards (or state approved local standards) will be phased-in over a period of several years according to the following schedule. The progress report will be included in the State of the Schools report to be initially published in fall 2001.

Schools may conduct assessment at any time during a given school year. Reports will be submitted to NDE at the conclusion of the school year.

School Year	Grades 4, 8, and High School
2000-01	*Reading/Writing
2001-02	Mathematics
2002-03	*Reading/Writing Social Studies
2003-04	Mathematics Science
2004-05	*Reading/Writing Social Studies
2005-06	Mathematics Science

*Reading/writing assessments will also incorporate speaking and listening standards.

GENERAL PROCEDURES FOR THE LOCAL ASSESSMENT (To Be Reported To NDE In Spring 2001)

What Types of Assessment Will Be Used?

Each public school district will administer norm-referenced and criterion-referenced assessments to determine student progress in achieving state standards. Assessment will be phased-in according to the following general sequence:

- Reading/writing (including speaking and listening) (2000-01)
- Mathematics (2001-02)
- Social studies/history (2002-03)
- Science (2003-04)

Norm-referenced tests will be selected from the following:

- Iowa Test of Basic Skills—Form K, L, or M Complete Battery
- Stanford Achievement Test—SAT 9 Complete Battery Form S
- California Achievement Test—CAT 5 Form A & B Complete Battery
- Terra Nova—Complete Battery Plus (CTBS/5)
- Metropolitan Achievement Test—MAT 7 Form S Complete Battery
- Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) (Will no longer be on the accepted list after 2001)

Criterion-referenced assessments will be used to determine student progress toward standards not assessed by the norm-referenced tests listed above. Districts are free to develop their own criterion-referenced instruments, to collaborate with other districts sharing the same standards and the same norm-referenced test, or to purchase criterion-referenced instruments tailored to their needs by commercial test publishers. Criterion referenced assessments may include classroom assessments such as documentable observations, portfolios, or rubrics.

When Will Assessment Take Place?

Assessment of progress toward reading/writing standards will begin in School Year 2000-2001. Assessment of other standards will be phased-in according to the schedule on page 36.

Each district will report student progress in achievement of standards. Reporting procedures will be developed by the Nebraska Department of Education based on pilot reporting and other input in 1999-2000.

Who Will be Assessed?

All students in grades 4, 8, and 11 (or a high school grade with a grade 11 report) are to be assessed. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 1997) presupposes that all students with disabilities will fully participate in all district-wide assessments in the same manner as their nondisabled peers **unless** an IEP team determines that: (1) such participation is not appropriate without reasonable accommodations or (2) such assessment is not appropriate, and they identify an alternate form of assessment.

Reporting Performance Levels

Purpose for "Performance Levels"
Performance levels provide a structure for reporting student progress and help to answer the question, "What does good performance look like?" Therefore, they help clarify expectations for students and teachers. They also provide more precise information for educators and policy makers in determining and responding to areas of need. As educators address those needs, the report of performance levels helps to show trends and progress. This information contributes to individual student learning and to overall school improvement planning by providing a basis with which to measure and demonstrate growth.

What is a "Performance Level"?
Performance levels show the percentage of students achieving predetermined levels of performance. The following levels are suggested: beginning, progressing, proficient, and advanced.

When using norm-referenced tests, the level is based on a percentile score. When using criterion-referenced assessments, performance standards for scoring the assessment should be defined during development. Performance standards may be considered a rubric of four levels describing consistent expectations for the student in each content standard. Performance standards can thus be defined for a variety of types of classroom assessments including portfolios, student demonstrations, observation scales, and so forth.

A sample set of performance levels is provided below:

- **Beginning**
  Limited mastery of essential knowledge and skills; may require assistance or extended time in applying knowledge and skills.

- **Progressing**
  Partial mastery of essential knowledge and skills; partial success in tasks using this knowledge or skill.

- **Proficient**
  Solid academic performance, demonstrates competency of subject matter knowledge, applies such knowledge to real-world situations.

- **Advanced**
  Superior performance, in-depth understanding, application of knowledge and skills to develop new understanding and solutions.

What Provisions are Made for Students With Disabilities?

Districts follow state and federal guidelines for assessment and reporting of students with disabilities. The IEP team determines which of the following statements best describes the student's **curriculum:**

General Description of Curriculum Presented	District-wide Assessment		Alternate Assessment
	No Accom. Needed	Accom. Needed	
A. Student participates with no special or only slight accommodation in general academic curriculum.	Yes	Yes	No
B. Student participates with significant accommodation to the general academic curriculum.	No	Yes	No, with some exceptions
C. Student does not participate in general academic curriculum. Student receives an alternative curriculum.	No	No	Yes

If appropriate, the IEP team determines the accommodations necessary for the student to participate in district-wide assessment. Accommodations used in assessment must be consistent with accommodations outlined in the IEP for the student's instructional program.

If an alternate assessment is used, the IEP describes why district-wide assessment is not appropriate, and how the student will be assessed, using an alternate assessment.

Disaggregation of Data

Disaggregation of data refers to the reporting of the performance of selected subgroups of a population. This information helps determine if specific populations of students need additional assistance in achieving standards.

It is anticipated that district reports will show student performance data disaggregated by selected subgroup **whenever the number of students in the subgroup comprises the greater of the two below**:

- 5% of the grade being tested

  or

- 10 students of the grade being tested

} Whichever is greater

The local district will find it helpful, in analyzing local achievement gains and needs, to have information about the progress of selected subgroups. This may include progress of students reported by category such as gender, race, disabilities, newly enrolled, and/or economically disadvantaged. In addition, disaggregation of those newly enrolled and economically disadvantaged may help identify special challenges faced by the district in achieving academic standards. The disaggregated data is to be used locally for analysis, planning, and school improvement.

Federal and State Guidelines for Reporting and Disaggregating Test Data

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 and 92 NAC 51 require reporting to the public with the same frequency and in the same detail as reports on the assessment of children who are not disabled.

The following information will be included in such reports:

- The number of children with disabilities participating in district-wide assessments with or without accommodation.
- The number of children participating in alternate assessments.

The report must include:

- Aggregated data that include the performance of children with disabilities together with all other children.
- Disaggregated data on the performance of children with disabilities, if doing so would be statistically sound and would not result in the disclosure of performance results identifiable to individual children.

Congruence with Federal Programs

Various federal programs have specific reporting requirements for assessing progress, disaggregating results, and reporting results at the state and federal levels. Reporting procedures developed for use in Nebraska schools will be designed to accommodate and support unique needs of federal programs. The reporting procedures therefore, will, incorporate reporting for Vocational Education, Special Education, and IASA Title I.

Approval of Local Standards

Districts may report progress of students toward the local rather than the state standards if the local standards are approved by the State Board of Education. School districts which have local standards approved by the State Board of Education, but that conduct testing in grades other than 4, 8, and 11, may report progress at other grades if they also obtain approval of their standards and assessment process from the Department. Procedures for submitting the standards may be obtained from NDE.

STATEWIDE WRITING ASSESSMENT

General Information

Nebraska Statute 79-760 requires a statewide writing assessment using actual writing samples of students in grades 4, 8, and in high school. The assessment is scheduled to begin in 2000-01 and will be based upon writing processes focusing on traits of quality writing commonly used in many Nebraska schools. Districts may use the information gained through the statewide assessment to demonstrate progress toward the corresponding writing standards. Plans for the assessment are under development.

Staff members from local districts, Educational Service Units, colleges and universities, and the Nebraska Department of Education may serve as staff development resources for writing assessment procedures. Writing assessments are most effectively administered by classroom teachers as an integral part of instructional activities. Therefore, it is anticipated that local staff will administer the assessment following prescribed procedures. Student writing samples will be reviewed by external reviewers who have received specific training for this purpose.

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS (NAEP)

What

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) was initiated in 1968 to track "academic progress" of groups of American students (e.g., fourth graders) over extended periods of time. It is the only test designed for this purpose.

When

Biennially on even years. Months of January and February.

Who

Randomly selected schools and students at grades 4 and 8.

How Selected

The school enrollment numbers (by grade, gender, and race) of all participating states are submitted to Westat Selection Corporation of Rockville, Maryland which makes a representative "stratified random selection" of schools within each of the participating states.

How Scored

By Educational Testing Service (ETS) of Princeton, New Jersey.

How Reported

Scores are reported by NAEP at the state and national levels only. No information is reported of individual schools or districts.

Plan for 1999-2000

Randomly selected Nebraska schools will participate in assessment of science and math in grades 4 and 8.

PRIMARY GRADE ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING

Assessment and Reporting Procedures

State Board of Education policy indicates that public schools should assess and report the progress of students relative to the standards in the basic literacies of reading, writing, and mathematics for grades 1-3. Individual information/data should be reported to respective parents or guardians. General information about assessment processes and student progress in the primary grades is to be reported annually to the local board and community. It is recommended that the report be provided and distributed by each elementary building rather than as a district wide report.

NDE Rule 10 (92 NAC 10) establishes that whole-grade norm-referenced assessment begins no earlier than grade 2. Districts may use locally developed indicators of student achievement to report progress of students in grades 1-3 in reading, writing, and mathematics. The report may summarize general progress in the primary grades as indicated through teacher observation, portfolio collections, and other assessments.

Purpose of Assessment in the Primary Grades

Ongoing assessment is embedded within all effective teaching and learning. Teachers continuously assess children's learning to make decisions about curriculum, teaching practices, learning activities, material, classroom environment, and to make reports to parents. Assessment of each child's learning provides information about individual strengths and needs in areas of knowledge, skills, and attitudes so that teachers can best support children in growing toward their maximum learning potential. In addition, children build competence in identifying criteria for quality work, planning, and carrying out activities in meaningful ways, and in reflecting on their own work to evaluate their learning. Reporting to parents should include not only information about the child's achievements, but also on what to expect next.

What Information About the Progress of Primary Grade Children Should Be Included in the District's Performance Report?

A district's performance report should provide general information about how the progress of primary grade children is evaluated, particularly in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. Information might include a brief description of assessment practices used to document learning in relation to content standards and developmental guidelines. The report might identify ways documentation is collected, such as teacher observations, portfolios, and other age-appropriate assessment processes.

REPORTING PROCEDURES FOR SMALL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

State Board policy indicates that the statewide assessment and reporting process should include progress of children in all public schools. However, many Class I, and some Class II, schools have very few students in the grades being assessed. Therefore, in order to assure confidentiality of individual student scores, the following reporting is planned:

- Schools having fewer than 10 students in the grade being reported will submit a report of student progress directly to the Department of Education for inclusion in aggregated statewide reports of school information for Class I and Class II schools.
- Class I and II schools having 10 or more students in the grades being reported will prepare an individual school report using the same procedures as other districts.

SCHOOL SYSTEM PERFORMANCE

The State of the Schools Report will contain a profile of each school district including:

- Student performance (student progress in achieving standards)
- School system performance

School system performance will include data such as the following:

A. Student Enrollment Data:

- Total enrollment
- Pupil-Classroom teacher ratio
- Average class size
- Average daily attendance
- Drop-out rate and actual number of drop-outs
- Graduation rate
- Student mobility rates

B. School Program Data:

- Instructional units provided for high school students
- Special Education population
- Title I population
- Limited English population
- Gifted program population
- Advanced Placement population

C. Staff information:

- Number of staff
- Number of teaching days
- Number of professional development days
- Average salary

D. Financial Resource Allocation and Expenditures:

- Revenue
- Expenditures
- Per pupil costs
- Assessed valuation and property value per student

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Section IV

Developing a Local Assessment Plan

IV. DEVELOPING A LOCAL ASSESSMENT PLAN

Suggested Procedures for Developing a Local Assessment Plan

Many Nebraska school districts have comprehensive plans for assessment of student performance. Others are beginning to develop such plans. The following are suggested steps for reviewing, updating, or developing local assessment plans:

Step	Action
A	Establish a task force to coordinate the review or development of the local assessment plan. This task force should be a part of the local school improvement committee structure.
B	Gather/review current information regarding assessment. Contact the Educational Service Unit or other resources for assistance.
C	Evaluate current assessment tools already in use.
D	Outline content areas/topics to be included in the plan.
E	Prepare a draft plan.
F	Submit the draft plan to other school staff, board members, and others for review and response.
G	Adjust the plan in response to input received.
H	Provide the plan to the local board of education.
I	Submit the plan to NDE by September 15, 2000 (tentative date).

Content of the Local Assessment Plan

The plan should be based on the information below. (An outline is included on page 53.)

A. Statement(s) of Purpose

This section provides information for the statement(s) of purpose for the local assessment program. For example, a purpose statement may indicate that the primary purpose of assessment is to assist teachers and administrators in instructional and curricular design to insure that students achieve the skills and knowledge contained in local and state standards. A secondary purpose may be for accountability—to provide a reporting system that informs the public how well students are learning. The assessment system will yield accurate information only when standards, instruction, and assessment are aligned.

B. Explanation of How the Local Assessment Will Address the Standards

Districts will need to use a combination of norm-referenced, criterion-referenced, and perhaps other performance assessments to determine student progress in meeting the standards. A variety of types of criterion-referenced assessments are appropriate. This may include paper-and-pencil tests, performance assessments, teacher checklists of progress, and so forth. Some standards can be assessed through nationally normed tests. However, none of the nationally normed standardized tests completely aligns with all the Nebraska standards. Therefore, student progress on remaining standards must be assessed through other means. The local plan, therefore, should include the following assessment components:

1. Norm-referenced assessment indicating:
    a. Standards to be assessed by the norm-referenced test
    b. Grade levels to be assessed
    c. Time line for implementation
    d. Test(s) to be used
    e. How the test was selected
2. Criterion-referenced assessment component indicating:
    a. Standards to be assessed
    b. Grade levels to be assessed
    c. Time line for implementation

d. How the assessment was developed or selected.

e. Assessment quality description (This includes evidence that the test reflects the standards, that students have an opportunity to learn the content, that the test is free from bias, that the level is appropriate for the students, and that there is consistency in the scoring.) (See page 55.)

3. Accommodations for students with special needs. (See page 39.)

C. Procedures for Other Assessments and/or Information Sources

This should include the following:

1. Primary grade progress. A description of how progress will be determined for primary grade students (1-3). (Note: In accord with Rule 10 provisions, norm-referenced assessment is not conducted below grade 2.)

2. Statewide writing assessment. A statement indicating the district will participate (additional information for this item will be provided by NDE).

3. National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). A statement indicating that the district will participate if randomly selected.

4. Voluntary Assessments. A description of what is done to encourage student participation in any voluntary assessment (such as ACT, Work Keys, and so forth) and what the school does to help students demonstrate successful performance.

5 Assessment of other local standards. A description or chart describing how the district assesses progress in curricular areas not included in Nebraska L.E.A.R.N.S.

D. Chart or Matrix

Include a chart or matrix showing which L.E.A.R.N.S. standards are measured by each assessment. (See page 54.) (Districts having state approved local standards should design a chart using local standards.)

If appropriate, it may also be helpful to include a chart of assessments for other subject areas.

E. Alignment With Local School Improvement Plan

Include a description or outline indicating how the implementation of standards, assessment, and accountability reporting align with the local school improvement plan and processes. This may include, for example, when and how the school improvement data is collected, analyzed, and reported; how local improvement strategies will incorporate analysis of best practices for instruction to achieve standards; and so forth. (See page 16 for an example.)

F. Reporting to the Public

Include information from local board policies and/or other appropriate descriptions to indicate how the information about student progress in achieving the standards will be reported to parents, board members, and the general public.

EXAMPLE

_____ PUBLIC SCHOOLS ASSESSMENT PLAN

A. Purpose(s) of the Local Assessment Program

B. Explanation of How the Assessment Will Address the Standards

1. Norm-referenced assessment:
   a. Standards to be assessed
   b. Grades
   c. Time line
   d. Tests
   e. How selected
2. Criterion-referenced component: (includes performance and other types of criterion-referenced tests)
   a. Standards to be assessed
   b. Grades
   c. Time line
   d. How developed or selected
   e. Quality description
3. Accommodations for students with special needs

C. Procedures for other assessments/information sources

1. Primary grade progress
2. Statewide writing assessment
3. NAEP
4. Voluntary assessments
5. Local standards in curricular areas not in Nebraska L.E.A.R.N.S.

D. Charts or Matrixes

1. Showing which assessment is used to measure each standard. (See example on page 54.)
2. Showing district assessment plans for curricular areas not in Nebraska L.E.A.R.N.S.

E. Alignment With Local School Improvement Plan

F. Reporting to the Public

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EXAMPLE

LOCAL CHART OF ASSESSMENT MEASURES

GRADE 4 READING/WRITING STANDARDS

This provides one example of how a school might indicate how each standard is assessed.

Reading/Writing Standards	Assessment Components: Nationally Normed Achievement Test	Locally Developed Assessments	Teacher Assessments
Reading			
4.1.1	✓		
4.1.2	✓		
4.1.3	✓		
4.1.4	✓		
4.1.5		✓	
4.1.6		✓	
4.1.7		✓	
4.1.8		✓	
Writing			
4.2.1	✓		
4.2.2		✓	
4.2.3		✓	
4.2.4		✓	
4.2.5		✓	
Speaking			
4.3.1			✓
4.3.2			✓
Listening			
4.4.1			✓

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Criteria for Determining Assessment Quality

The suggested School Performance Index (see page 62) includes a scale for determining the quality of the local assessment. This rating is to include both the norm- and criterion-referenced component of the local assessment. Quality will be judged using a rubric based upon quality assessment principles.

Therefore, the assessment quality will be based upon evidence such as the following:

- That the assessments reflect the standards.
- That students have an opportunity to learn the content.
- That the assessments are free from bias.
- That the level is appropriate for the students.
- That there is consistency in scoring.

Mastery levels are appropriate

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Section V

Accountability: Review and Reporting

V. ACCOUNTABILITY REVIEW AND REPORTING

Procedures for Review of Local Assessment Plans

The following proposed review procedures are intended to provide support and assistance to schools and assure quality of local assessment procedures. A rubric to assist with this "self-check" will be provided to Nebraska schools. (See page 55.)

STEP 1: The Local District Self-Check

Local districts may use the information in Part IV of this manual, plus other guides or checklists provided by NDE, to conduct a self-check of the local assessment plan and procedures. A rubric to assist with the self-check will be based upon quality criteria such as those on page 55.

STEP 2: NDE Review of Local Assessment Plans

Schools will be asked to submit local assessment plans to the State Department of Education in September 2000 (see Section IV of this manual for format and suggestions). Plans will be reviewed to assure that the districts have addressed and fulfilled the quality criteria.

STEP 3: External Visitation Team Review

It is proposed that visitation teams hosted as a part of the school improvement process include, as one component, a subcommittee to review the local district assessment plans and procedures, and provide input and advice. It is recommended that this review take place on a five-year schedule for each school district. A cadre of persons with expertise in assessment will participate in training to provide consistent and quality review of local assessment plans.

STEP 4: Independent Agency Review

It is proposed that districts submit their assessment plans and assessment instruments to an independent, outside agency for review and evaluation based on a minimum set of criteria. This activity would take place every five years and would provide consultative assistance plus assurance of quality assessment procedures.

REPORTING THE RESULTS

The Local Report

Since 1989, Nebraska school districts have been required, by Rule 10 (accreditation), to provide an annual report to residents of the district. The reports include data on student performance, district demographics, and financial information. Every two years, these reports must include a report of a learning climate assessment, and every three years, a report of a graduate follow-up survey. Often school reports include a report of the local school improvement plan plus any other information unique to the local community.

Nebraska schools provide the reports in varying formats and procedures depending upon local circumstances. It is anticipated that information gathered to assess progress toward academic standards, plus any other newly required data, will become a part of the local performance report.

Local performance reports should:

- Provide accountability to the local board, parents, and patrons.
- Assist district policy makers in focusing programs and resources.
- Support local school improvement procedures.

Schools are encouraged to review local policies and procedures to assure that information is provided in a clear format, including analysis or summary statements to help staff, board members, and patrons interpret and use information to help reach decisions regarding future directions for the school. Formats used for state level reports may serve as a guide for portions of the local report. Distribution of these reports will fulfill the Rule 10 requirement for an annual report to the residents of the district.

The State Report

Based upon statutory requirements and State Board policy, a state report will begin with a Statewide Report Card to be issued in fall 2000 and a State of the Schools Report to be issued annually beginning in fall 2001.

The fall 2000 Report Card will include the following (as specified in LB 144, passed in the 1999 session of the legislature):

1. Demographic information on a statewide basis (for example: total number of students, staff, and school districts).

2. An aggregate report of statewide student performance. This may, for example, report percentage of total students statewide in grades 4, 8, and 11 who score in specified quartiles on standardized achievement tests. Nebraska NAEP results may also be included.

3. Other information specified in LB 144 ("teacher and student attendance, teacher qualifications and salaries, and graduate tracking.").

The fall 2001 State of the Schools Report will include:

1. Profiles of individual school districts with information already reported to NDE (such as number of students and staff, average daily attendance, graduation rate, financial data, and so forth) and new information regarding student performance of the standards.

2. An insert with aggregate statewide information as provided on the fall 2000 statewide Report Card.

During 1999-2000, reporting procedures will be piloted in a cross-section of Nebraska schools to help determine procedures and formats that will be effective, clear, and user-friendly. It is anticipated that information will be transmitted through electronic reporting procedures in order to expedite and simplify the reporting process.

A rating formula (School Performance Index) will be provided to help each school district determine an overall rating based on student performance in achieving the standards. The suggested formula will allow schools to show progress in meeting the standards in relation to unique factors, such as population mobility, that may impact student performance. (See page 62.)

Information obtained from Nebraska schools will be compiled, organized, analyzed, and summarized for publication in statewide reports. The annual Statewide Report Card and State of the Schools report for the preceding school year will be distributed in the fall of each year.

A SUGGESTED SCHOOL PERFORMANCE INDEX (How are we doing?)

The School Performance Index (SPI) is a formula that takes into account three factors: student performance, assessment quality, and unique local challenges. The SPI formula may be used to compute a district rating. The use of this index equalizes the varied circumstances of schools in analyzing progress. Nebraska schools will use an SPI such as the following:

Assessment Quality	×	Percentage of Students Achieving the Standards	×	Challenge Index	=	Rating
(1 – 10)	×	%	×	(1 – 5)	=	

Assessment Quality is rated on a scale of 1 through 10. Local assessments having a rating of 4 or lower would be considered unacceptable and any such schools will receive guidance in revising the assessment. (See page 55 regarding rating process.)

Percentage of Students Achieving Standards is determined by the local school district through the assessment of students in grades 4, 8, and 11 in achieving the standards in a designated subject area.

The Challenge Index identifies areas of challenge that may vary from district to district. It may include the following categories:

- Students with disabilities.
- Student mobility (percentage of students new to the district).
- Students of low socio-economic status.
- Students with English as a Second Language or Limited English Proficiency.

CALCULATING THE SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

Using a School Performance Index

(An Example)

Assessment Quality

Low ◄——————————► High

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

→ [ ]

×

Percentage of Students Achieving the Standards → [ ]

×

Challenge Index

% of Students	Low		Nebraska Average	High	
	1	2	3	4	5
Disability					
Mobility					
Socio Economic					
ESL/LEP					

→ [ ]

DISTRICT RATING = [ ]

STARS

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Section VI

Common Questions and Answers

V. COMMON QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. **What is the difference between the Report Card and the State of the Schools report?**

   *The **Report Card** will be issued in the fall of 2000. It will provide summary information about Nebraska schools as one statewide group. It will include information about student performance, but it will not report progress toward the standards.*

   *A **State of the Schools** report will be issued in fall 2001. It will provide information about each public school district, including student progress toward the standards. The statewide "Report Card" will be included as a part of the annual "State of the Schools Report."*

2. **What will be included on the State Report Card?**

   It will report items specified by state law (LB 144 passed in 1999). These include student achievement, graduation rate, student attendance, teacher attendance, teacher qualifications, graduate follow-up, and school funding. The report card will show a statewide aggregate for each category rather than individual school data.

3. **What will be the first curricular area to be assessed and reported on the State of the Schools Report, and who will be included?**

   In 2000-01, all public school districts will assess and report student progress toward the reading-writing-speaking-listening standards for grades 4, 8, and 11.

4. **Are schools required to test in the spring?**

   Assessment may take place any time during the school year. Reports will be submitted to NDE at the end of the school year.

5. **Can a school use only criterion-referenced assessments to meet the standards?**

   Yes. The procedures used to develop or select items and the assessment quality would be described in the local assessment plan. It would be expected that the plan would incorporate the role of norm-referenced assessment in the district assessment system.

6. **How should children with severe disabilities be assessed?**

   The student should be assessed in accordance with the goals and objectives established in the individual education plan. If the program in the IEP is not related to the Nebraska standards, the student should be assessed against a standard appropriate for the student.

7. **What if the district tests 10th graders rather than 11th graders?**

   The district may assess high school students at any time that students have had an opportunity to learn the content being assessed. This may be at either the 10th or 11th grade.

8. **What will the statewide writing assessment consist of?**

   It will be an assessment of actual student writing samples judged by a common rubric. It will be based on practices commonly used for teaching writing in Nebraska schools.

9. **Can the statewide writing assessment be used by schools as a way to assess local progress toward the writing standards?**

   Yes. It may be used to determine progress toward the appropriate writing standards.

10. **What if we have local standards that are equivalent to or more rigorous than the state standards?**

    Schools may submit the local standards to NDE for approval. The local assessment plan may then address the approved local standards.

11. **Where can I get assistance in designing the local assessment plan?**

    Contact your ESU staff for assistance. Staff of institutions of higher education and NDE staff may also provide technical assistance.

12. **Who will serve on the team to review the local assessment plan?**

    The team will include persons who have knowledge and expertise in student assessment and who have participated in specific training to review local assessment plans.

STARS

School-based Teacher-led Assessment and Reporting System

Nebraska Planning Guide

Section VII

Appendices

APPENDIX A

DEFINITIONS

Norm-Referenced Tests. A test in which the scores of individual students, or the average score of a particular class of students, may be compared to the scores on the same test administered earlier to a nationally representative sample group of students. For such tests to be valid, they must be administered under standardized conditions. For this reason they are sometimes called *standardized tests*. The purpose of such tests is to compare the achievement of local students to that of other students on a national or statewide basis.

Criterion-Referenced Tests. A test in which the scores of individual students, or the average score of a particular class of students, may be compared directly to the pre-established curricular or instructional objectives of the teacher, the school or school district, or the state. This is the standard which the student is expected to achieve to be successful.

Teacher (Classroom) Assessment. Assessments developed by teachers for use in many instructional-related decisions such as identifying what students have learned from the curriculum, making diagnoses regarding student strengths and weaknesses, providing feedback to students regarding their academic performance, assigning grades denoting student learning and progress in the curriculum content, and planning instruction. Assessment can include paper-and-pencil tests, student learning demonstrations, teacher observations, student performance evaluation, and portfolio assessments.

APPENDIX B

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION ASSESSMENT POLICY

Approved October 1, 1998

Local Responsibility

The State Board of Education believes that the assessment of student academic performance is a local responsibility. Local assessment serves three major purposes:

- To aid in planning and providing classroom instruction appropriate to student needs.
- To assist in making decisions about placement of students.
- To monitor the progress of students in a program, school, or district.

Although each function is vital, the primary purpose of assessment is to improve instruction and increase learning in the classroom. The results of assessment should be used primarily to judge how well individual students are learning and to modify instruction accordingly.

Since each assessment process or instrument has different strengths, no single one can adequately achieve all of the above purposes. Therefore, multiple assessment processes are necessary to provide information for teachers, parents, and policy makers.

Statewide Role

The State Board of Education believes that all public school districts in Nebraska should participate in an assessment process implemented through the use of multiple validated measures already in use in Nebraska schools. This assessment process should provide information to monitor the progress of public school districts and to assist in making informed decisions.

It is the policy of the State Board of Education to strengthen education in the State of Nebraska by:

1. Clarifying the expectations for educational achievement of students through the establishment of state content standards.
2. Insuring that all students in public schools have a similar opportunity to demonstrate academic achievement and progress in mastering the content standards through an assessment process.

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3. Establishing a reporting system so that parents, decision makers, and other citizens have a better opportunity to judge the relative effectiveness of their local public school district in helping students to meet and exceed state content standards.

4. Promoting staff development that will assist Nebraska educators in using student assessment appropriately.

5. Insuring that a student assessment system is based upon sound classroom assessment.

6. Using multiple validated measures for statewide assessment only to monitor school performance.

It is also the policy of the Board that assessments used or developed for use in Nebraska shall assess academic content only.

Evaluation

The State Board of Education shall establish a process for periodic evaluation of the assessment policy, plan, and practices by an independent body. The evaluation shall be the basis for determining how well the assessment measures student learning as defined by the standards and the basis for considering changes in the policy, plan, and practices.

APPENDIX C

GRADE 4 READING/WRITING STANDARDS

Coverage by Achievement Test Subtests and Composite Scores

Provided by the Buros Institute, University of Nebraska–Lincoln

Achievement Test	Nebraska Reading/Writing Standards Assessed*			
Stanford Achievement Test				
Reading Total (Vocabulary, Comprehension)	4.1.1	4.1.2	4.1.3	
Language Total		4.2.1		
Spelling		4.2.1		
Study Skills		4.1.4		
Listening		4.4.1		
Metropolitan Achievement Test				
Reading Total (Vocabulary, Comprehension)	4.1.1	4.1.2	4.1.3	
Language		4.1.4	4.2.1	
California Achievement Test				
Reading Total (Vocabulary, Comprehension)	4.1.1	4.1.2	4.1.3	4.1.6
Spelling		4.2.1		
Language Total (Language Mech/Expression)		4.2.1		
Study Skills		4.1.3	4.1.4	
Terra Nova				
Reading and Language Arts	4.1.1	4.1.2	4.1.3	4.2.1
Iowa Tests of Basic Skills				
Vocabulary		4.1.1	4.1.2	
Comprehension		4.2.1	4.1.3	
Language Total (Spelling, Capitalization, Punctuation, Use and Expression)		4.1.4		
Reference Materials		4.1.2		

*Students scoring at or above the 50th percentile are considered to be meeting the standards.

GRADE 4 MATHEMATICS STANDARDS

Coverage by Achievement Test Subtests and Composite Scores

Provided by the Buros Institute, University of Nebraska–Lincoln

Achievement Test	Nebraska Mathematics Standards Assessed*					
Stanford Achievement Test						
Mathematics Total (Problem Solving, Procedures)	4.1.1	4.1.3	4.2.1	4.3.2	4.5.1	
Metropolitan Achievement Test						
Mathematics Total (Problem Solving, Procedures)		4.1.1	4.2.1	4.5.1		
California Achievement Test						
Mathematics Total (Computation, Concepts)	4.1.1	4.2.1	4.2.2	4.2.3	4.5.1	4.6.2
Study Skills			4.5.1			
Terra Nova						
Mathematics		4.1.1	4.2.1	4.4.3	4.5.1	
Iowa Tests of Basic Skills						
Mathematics Total (Concepts and Estimation, Problem Solving and Data Analysis, Computation)		4.1.1	4.1.3	4.2.1	4.3.2	4.5.1
Maps and Diagrams				4.5.1		

*Students scoring at or above the 50th percentile are considered to be meeting the standards.

GRADE 4 SCIENCE STANDARDS

Coverage by Achievement Test Subtests and Composite Scores

Provided by the Buros Institute, University of Nebraska–Lincoln

Achievement Test	Nebraska Science Standards Assessed*				
■ Stanford Achievement Test	4.1.2	4.1.3	4.3.1	4.4.3	4.4.1
■ Metropolitan Achievement Test			4.3.3	4.4.1	
■ California Achievement Test	4.1.2	4.3.3	4.4.1	4.5.2	4.4.3
■ Terra Nova		4.1.2	4.3.1	4.4.1	4.4.3
■ Iowa Tests of Basic Skills		4.3.1	4.4.	4.4.3	

*Students scoring at or above the 50th percentile are considered to be meeting the standards.

GRADE 4 SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS

Coverage by Achievement Test Subtests and Composite Scores

Provided by the Buros Institute, University of Nebraska–Lincoln

Achievement Test	Nebraska Social Studies Standards Assessed*
■ Stanford Achievement Test	None
■ Metropolitan Achievement Test	None
■ California Achievement Test	None
■ Terra Nova	4.21
■ Iowa Tests of Basic Skills	None

*Students scoring at or above the 50th percentile are considered to be meeting the standards.

GRADE 8 READING/WRITING STANDARDS

Coverage by Achievement Test Subtests

Provided by the Buros Institute, University of Nebraska–Lincoln

Achievement Test	Nebraska Reading/Writing Standards Assessed*			
Stanford Achievement Test				
Reading Total (Vocabulary, Comprehension)		8.1.1	8.1.7	
Language Total	8.1.1	8.2.1	8.2.3	
Spelling		8.2.1	8.2.3	
Study Skills		8.1.1	8.1.2	
Listening		8.4.1	8.4.2	
Metropolitan Achievement Test				
Reading Total (Vocabulary, Comprehension)	8.1.1	8.2.1	8.2.3	
Language	8.1.2	8.2.1	8.2.2	8.2.3
California Achievement Test				
Reading Total (Vocabulary, Comprehension)	8.1.1	8.1.3	8.2.1	8.2.3
Spelling		8.2.1	8.2.3	
Language Total (Language Mech/Expression)	8.1.1	8.2.1	8.2.2	8.2.3
Study Skills	8.1.1	8.1.2	8.2.5	
Terra Nova				
Reading and Language Arts	8.1.1	8.1.7	8.2.1	8.2.3
Vocabulary		8.1.1		
Language Mech/Expression		8.2.1		
Spelling		8.2.1		
Iowa Tests of Basic Skills				
Vocabulary	8.1.1	8.2.3		
Comprehension	8.1.1	8.1.7		
Language Total (Spelling, Capitalization, Punctuation, Use, and Expression)	8.2.1	8.2.2	8.2.3	
Reference Materials	8.1.1	8.1.2		

*Students scoring at or above the 50th percentile are considered to be meeting the standards.

GRADE 8 MATHEMATICS STANDARDS

Coverage by Achievement Test Subtests

Provided by the Buros Institute, University of Nebraska–Lincoln

Achievement Test	Nebraska Mathematics Standards Assessed*					
Stanford Achievement Test						
Mathematics Total (Problem Solving, Procedures)	8.2.1	8.2.2	8.2.3	8.2.5	8.5.2	
Metropolitan Achievement Test						
Mathematics Total (Problem Solving, Procedures)	8.2.1	8.2.2	8.2.3	8.2.5	8.5.2	
California Achievement Test						
Mathematics Total (Computation, Concepts)	8.1.4	8.2.1	8.2.2	8.2.3	8.2.4	8.5.2
Study Skills			8.5.2			
Terra Nova						
Mathematics		8.1.4	8.2.2	8.2.3	8.5.2	
Computation			8.2.1	8.2.3		
Iowa Tests of Basic Skills						
Mathematics Total (Concepts and Estimation, Problem Solving and Data Analysis, Computation)		8.2.1	8.2.2	8.2.3	8.2.5	8.5.2
Maps and Diagrams			8.5.2			

*Students scoring at or above the 50th percentile are considered to be meeting the standards.

HIGH SCHOOL READING/WRITING STANDARDS

Coverage by Achievement Test Subtests

Provided by the Buros Institute, University of Nebraska–Lincoln

Achievement Test	Nebraska Reading/Writing Standards Assessed*					
Stanford Achievement Test						
Reading Total (Vocabulary, Comprehension)			12.1.1	12.1.6	12.2.1	12.2.3
Language Total			12.2.1	12.2.2	12.2.3	
Spelling				12.2.1		
Study Skills				12.1.1	12.1.2	
Metropolitan Achievement Test						
Reading Total (Vocabulary, Comprehension)				12.1.1	12.2.1	
Language			12.1.2	12.2.1	12.2.2	12.2.3
California Achievement Test						
Reading Total (Vocabulary, Comprehension)	12.1.1	12.1.3	12.1.7	12.1.8	12.2.1	12.2.3
Spelling				12.2.1		
Language Total (Language Mech/Expression)			12.2.1	12.2.2	12.2.3	
Study Skills		12.1.1	12.1.2	12.2.1	12.2.5	
Terra Nova						
Reading and Language Arts	12.1.1	12.1.2	12.1.7	12.2.1	12.2.2	12.2.3
Vocabulary			12.1.1	12.2.1	12.2.3	
Language Mechanics				12.2.1		
Spelling				12.2.1		
Iowa Tests of Basic Skills						
Interpret Literary Materials		12.1.1	12.1.3	12.1.5	12.1.8	
Correctness of Expression			12.2.1	12.2.2	12.2.3	
Source of Information			12.1.1	12.1.2		

*Students scoring at or above the 50th percentile are considered to be meeting the standards.

HIGH SCHOOL MATHEMATICS STANDARDS

Coverage by Achievement Test Subtests

Provided by the Buros Institute, University of Nebraska–Lincoln

Achievement Test	Nebraska Mathematics Standards Assessed*
Stanford Achievement Test	
Mathematics Total (Problem Solving, Procedures)	12.2.3 12.4.1 12.4.4 12.4.6 12.5.6 12.6.2
Metropolitan Achievement Test	
Mathematics Total (Problem Solving, Procedures)	12.2.1 12.2.3 12.4.1 12.6.2
California Achievement Test	
Mathematics Computation	12.1.2 12.2.1 12.2.3
Mathematics Concepts and Application	12.2.1 12.2.3 12.5.1
Terra Nova	
Mathematics	12.2.1 12.2.3 12.5.2
Computation	12.2.3
Iowa Tests of Basic Skills	
Mathematics Total (Concepts and Estimation, Problem Solving and Data Analysis, Computation)	12.2.1 12.2.3 12.5.1 12.5.2

*Students scoring at or above the 50th percentile are considered to be meeting the standards.

APPENDIX D

PROPOSED PLAN FOR REVIEW AND UPDATE OF STATE STANDARDS

	READING/ WRITING	MATH	SOCIAL STUDIES /HISTORY	SCIENCE
▮ Prepare Research Base of Content/Instructional Strategies ▮ Conduct External Review of Standards	2001	2002	2003	2004
▮ Revise Standards (Based on Research, External Reviews, Public Comment, etc.) ▮ Adopt Standards	2002	2003	2004	2005
▮ Implement Standards ▮ Dissemination ▮ Frameworks Revision ▮ Professional Development ▮ Alignment	2003 and 2004	2004 and 2005	2005 and 2006	2006 and 2007
▮ Program Review ▮ Plan New Cycle	2005	2006	2007	2008

APPENDIX E

SAMPLE CHART FOR REPORTING STUDENT PERFORMANCE ON STANDARDS

School District:_____ **Year:**_____ **Grade:**_____

Standards Reading/Writing	Assessment Instrument	Student Performance Levels							
		Beginning		Progressing		Proficient		Advanced	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
4.1.1 Unfamiliar words/phrases									
4.1.2 Advanced reading vocabulary									
4.1.3. Basic facts and essential ideas									
4.1.4 Access and evaluate resources									
4.1.5 Types of text									
4.1.6 Structure, elements, meaning of fiction									
4.1.7 Structure, elements, meaning of nonfiction									
4.1.8 Similar ideas across narrative									
4.2.1 Usage, punctuation, capitalization, spelling									
4.2.2 Write compositions									
4.2.3 Organization, content, voice									
4.2.4 Variety of forms of writing									
4.2.5 Questions, note taking, outlining									
4.3.1 Pose questions									
4.3.2 Oral presentations									
4.4.1 Listening									
	Total								
	Average								
Total achieving standards (Proficient + Advanced) =									**%**